

Medicine Bow Landscape Vegetation Analysis (LaVA)

Meeting Minutes

Cooperating Agencies Meeting
January 17, 2018; 9:30 am – 3:00 pm
In person or VTC

In Attendance:

Aaron Voos	Jessica Crowder	Michael Salazar
Bret Callaway	Josh Peck	Russ Bacon
Carolyn Upton	Katie Cheesbrough	Sarah Hutchins
Carson Engelskirger	Kawa Ng	Seth Kuchenbecker
Corey Class	Leanne Correll	Steve Loose
Daron Reynolds	Lisa Solberg	Tim Douville
Emma Vakili	Mark Conrad	Travis Pardue
Frank Romero	Martin Curry	
Jerod Delay	Melissa Martin	

Action Items:

- For those who need to create/edit posters, please submit them to Melissa Martin prior to the public engagement sessions.

Agenda Topics:

1. Thoughts Moving Forward with LaVA

DISCUSSION

- The group began with a round-table discussion on cooperators thoughts moving forward with the LaVA project. The cooperators shared some comments and concerns from members of the public regarding the LaVA project (e.g., some members of the public appear to base their opinions on misinformation or lack of information). Some cooperators stated they had heard positive responses from other members of the public who see benefits of the LaVA project.
 - Negative responses to the project appear to stem from lack of transparency or misinformation. Some believe the Forest Service is asking them to simply ‘trust the Forest Service.’ They have concerns with the scale, cumulative effects and site specificity. The idea of annual implementation caps were discussed as a way to address these concerns. However, caps could limit our ability to implement projects. It is difficult to predict future needs and available resources as they will fluctuate from year to year.
 - We have identified 360,000 acres of Forest that could use treatment. If the life of the project is 15 years than the average acres of treatment could be as high as 24,000. However, that number is an average and the treated acres could be higher or lower on a year to year basis. The 24,000 acres is higher than current levels of treatment.

- Excitement stems from benefits people see in the project. We should clarify that this project will allow us to work more closely with our partners to achieve multiple goals and that it is not one large timber sale.
 - The group came up with suggestions on how to communicate these benefits. The suggestions included creating a benefits chart and/or having cooperators generate a list project benefits. However, it was decided that our focus should be on clarifying project details and filling information gaps.

CONCLUSION

The public perception problem of the LaVA project still persists. Cooperators expressed that members of the public are misinformed or lack enough information. To address this issue, we are having public engagement sessions during the next two weeks. We want to provide clarity on the project and note its benefits to Forest projects and partnerships.

2. Public Engagement Sessions

DISCUSSION

- The upcoming public engagement sessions will be on January 23-24 in the Saratoga Office and January 30-31 at the Lincoln Community Center. The cooperators attending the meeting were finalized today.
- During the public engagement sessions, we want to correct misinformation and share our progress from the last meeting. The session will be formatted differently than a typical scoping meeting as we are hoping to engage in more one-on-one conversations. We want a representative at each of the four stations available to answer questions.
 - This is not a formal comment period and this is not an additional round of scoping. However, we want the public to stay engaged. We accept comments throughout analysis processes; comments are just more useful at particular points. The public can contact Melissa, Frank, or Aaron if they want to speak more on the project.
- Cooperators are encouraged to advertise these meetings through social media accounts or any other ways they see fit.
- The group reviewed the posters together and made discussions on which posters to display at this upcoming public engagement session. The posters not displayed will still be brought along to help answer possible questions from the public. Specific comments and changes to posters were captured in the unedited version of the notes.
 - In general, the group wanted to change the verbiage of the posters instill a more positive tone on the project. The group also wanted to see more visuals incorporated into the posters. Additionally, the group wanted to see changes in some of the color choices of the maps.
 - The TOA map categories will be changed (again). The three categories will be, 'No Treatment', 'Full Range of Treatment Tools', and 'Prescribed Fire and Hand Tools Only'. The areas where temporary roads will not be allowed will be represented by hash marks.

- Edits to the posters should be completed by Monday.
- The fact sheet(s) will be edited by Melissa Martin and Leanne Correll. There will be two versions of the facts sheet. One will be a longer, more comprehensive document that we can use internally and post on our website for those who want to learn more about the project. The second will be concise and fit on one page. The one-page fact sheet will be shared at the upcoming public engagement session.

CONCLUSION

Four public engagement sessions will take place over the next two weeks in Saratoga and Laramie. We want to engage with the public and clarify LaVA project details. During today's meeting, we discussed and made edits to material we plan to share at these public engagement sessions. Anyone who is responsible for finalizing material should have them submitted prior to the public engagement sessions.

The TOA categories have been changed and simplified. There are now three categories that represent the tools available in each area. The areas where temporary roads are prohibited will be represented by an overlaid, hashed shapefile.

3. Assumptions & Design Criteria

DISCUSSION

- The group used the remaining time in the meeting to discuss the assumptions portion of the Assumptions and Design Criteria document. The group proposed several possible assumptions to add to the document.
 - No new projects under LaVA will be started after 15 years.
 - A consistency review will be conducted every 5 years.
 - No treatment activities will occur outside of the established treatment opportunity areas.
 - We will develop a public engagement strategy to ensure some level of public engagement throughout the life of the project.
 - The next formal comment period on the project will come out with the draft EIS.
- The idea of adding priorities to the document was dismissed. Priorities are dependent of political factors and available resources.

CONCLUSION

The assumptions portion of the Assumptions and Design Criteria Document was bolstered. The additional proposed assumptions would make the project more transparent.

Meeting adjourned.